



Rother Valley Railway A21 Crossing

Walking, Cycling and Horse-Riding Assessment

Client: Rother Valley Railway Limited

i-Transport Ref: PH/JN/LC/ITL14477-003c R

Date: 06 January 2021

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Quality Management

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SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Rother Valley Railway Limited (RVR) has appointed i-Transport LLP to provide transport and highways advice in relation to a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) to construct, operate and maintain a new railway between Bodiam and Robertsbridge, East Sussex. It is intended that the existing heritage railway operation between Tenterden and Bodiam, the Kent and East Sussex Railway (KESR), would operate over the extension to allow services between Robertsbridge and Tenterden.
- 1.1.2 RVR would be the infrastructure manager of the railway extension who build the new track. KESR would be the operator of services over those tracks.
- 1.1.3 Whilst the proposals to reintroduce the railway between Bodiam and Robertsbridge have planning consent (*planning ref: RR/2014/1608/P*), the Transport and Works Act (TWA) process is separate to this and an Order (TWAO) must be made to allow the proposals to be implemented.
- 1.1.4 The extension of the railway requires the introduction of three level crossings, one of which would be located on the A21, part of the Strategic Road Network. Highways England (HE), are responsible for the Strategic Road Network.
- 1.1.5 As the proposals require changes to the trunk road network, there is a need to undertake a Walking, Cycling and Horse-Riding Assessment (WCHAR) in accordance with DMRB GG 142 - Walking, cycling and horse-riding assessment and review.
- 1.1.6 Given there is no pedestrian provision alongside the A21 and previous non-motorised user (NMU) surveys undertaken as part of the planning application process identified no pedestrians, cyclists or equestrian users, it was initially considered the scheme may be exempt from the WCHAR process as set out in the Arup exemption note. However, a 2019 automatic traffic counter placed on the A21 did record some cyclist movements (albeit this type of survey equipment is not well-suited to record cycling flows). A video survey of the Robertsbridge roundabout in March 2020 also identified cyclist movements between Northbridge Street and Church Lane as well as Northbridge Street and the A21 (N).

- 1.1.7 The video survey did not identify any pedestrian, cyclist, or horse riders on the section of the A21 south of the roundabout, i.e. where the highway scheme is proposed. However, it is recognised that queue lengths may extend through the roundabout and potentially interact with pedestrian and cyclist activity. For completeness, a WCHAR has been undertaken in accordance with DMRB GG 142.

1.2 WCHAR

Overview

- 1.2.1 The purpose of undertaking a WCHAR is to facilitate the inclusion of all walking, cycling & horse-riding modes in a highway scheme design process, enabling the design team to identify opportunities for improved facilities and integration with the local and national network(s) throughout the design process. The completion of a WCHAR is the responsibility of the design team organisation.
- 1.2.2 The WCHAR process is made up of two distinct parts. The first is an assessment of the existing situation (known as the Walking, Cycling & Horse-Riding Assessment); whilst the second part relates to an ongoing review of user opportunities throughout the detailed design process (known as the Walking, Cycling & Horse-Riding Review). The process concludes prior to the commencement of construction of a highway scheme.
- 1.2.3 This document is the Walking, Cycling & Horse-Riding Assessment report and is required to be completed prior to the end of the preliminary design phase (as noted in GG 142 paragraph 4.3), i.e. prior to detailed design commencing.
- 1.2.4 This WCHAR and its findings, have been undertaken in consultation with ARUP, who are Principal Designer of the A21 level crossing.
- 1.2.5 In addition, it is noted the introduction of the scheme may have effects beyond the immediate level crossing location and mitigation may be required. Accordingly, the WCHAR has been undertaken to understand existing conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders, such that any improvements, if necessary, as a result of the traffic impact of the proposals, can be introduced and considered at the start of the detailed design stage.

Process

1.2.6 The design team leader shall be responsible for appointing the Lead Assessor and in doing so should ensure that the person responsible for the role has sufficient knowledge and experience to manage and complete the process. Arup are the design team leader in this instance and therefore Arup have elected Jamie Narborough of i-Transport LLP to undertake the 'Lead Assessor' role.

1.2.7 There are two types of WCHAR to account for varying size and complexity of proposed highway schemes and this shall be determined by the Lead Assessor. These are as follows:

- A 'Large' scheme - highway schemes comprising new road construction (including new motorways where applicable), significant changes to an existing all-purpose trunk road or significant changes to an urban environment consisting of both the trunk road network and local highway network.
- A 'Small' scheme - highway schemes comprising minor changes to an existing all-purpose trunk road, or changes to existing motorway or trunk road junctions that affect the local highway network in a rural area.

1.2.8 Based on the above and exemplar schemes set out within Table 2.2.1 and Table 2.2.1N of GG 142, the scheme has been determined to be a 'small' scheme, i.e. there are no significant changes to the road layout/alignment that would require the scheme to be a large scheme.

1.2.9 Accordingly, this assessment has been prepared to:

- ***"gain an appropriate understanding of all relevant existing facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrian (users) in the local area;***
- ***provide background user information that can be referred to throughout the design process; and***
- ***identify opportunities for improvement for users".***

1.3 Scope and Structure

1.3.1 The scope of the study area is 1km, centred on the A21 level crossing proposals as required by GG 142 (paragraph 4.6.1).

1.3.2 This WCHAR does not consider the potential for 'train-spotters' congregating near the proposed A21 level crossing. This is in accordance with Paragraph 1.4 of DMRB GG 142, in that

“Ex-vehicle pedestrians, such as those using a lay-by or emergency refuge area, shall be exempt from the WCHAR process as their primary mode of travel to a particular location on the motorway and all purpose trunk road network is vehicular”.

1.3.3 Any such ‘train-spotters’ are likely to have made any such journey to the locality by vehicle.

1.3.4 In accordance with the requirements for a small scheme as per Table 4.7 of GG 142 and with appropriate reference to the example report at Appendix B of GG 142, the remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 – relevant national and local transport policies and strategies;
- Section 3 – PIA analysis;
- Section 4 – existing conditions including local amenities, public transport, walking and cycling facilities;
- Section 5 – site visit and a review of existing facilities;
- Section 6 – consultations;
- Section 7 – user opportunities; and
- Section 8 – team statement.

SECTION 2 POLICY REVIEW

2.1 National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)

- 2.1.1 Revised National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019), paragraph 98 identifies that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, and seek better facilities for users (i.e. walking, cycling and equine facilities).

Circular 02/13

- 2.1.2 This circular explains how Highways England (formally Highways Agency) will engage with the planning system. It also gives details on how Highways England will fulfil its remit to be a delivery partner for sustainable economic growth whilst maintaining, managing and operating a safe and efficient strategic road network.

2.2 Local Policy

East Sussex Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 (May 2011)

- 2.2.1 The East Sussex Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out the vision and strategy for transport in the county for the next 15 years.
- 2.2.2 Regarding non-motorised users, the LTP focusses on Active Travel and providing infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling. Some examples include the following:
- Consider crossing facilities on key routes of movement and improving mobility access by providing dropped kerbs and tactile paving;
 - Undertake walking and cycle audits of all transport improvement schemes to ensure they are accessible for all users;
 - Encourage high quality street design prioritising pedestrians; and
 - Consider new cycle routes and facilities to encourage recreational cycling and cycle tourism.

Rother District Council Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014)

- 2.2.3 The Rother District Council Core Strategy has been produced to set out the vision and strategy for land use and development in Rother District up to 2028.

2.2.4 Policy TR2 focusses on integrated transport and improvements to infrastructure to promote sustainable transport mode use through the following:

- Supporting the provision of a high quality cycle network to encourage a modal shift away from car trips;
- Improvements to the pedestrian environment and wider public spaces to encourage integration between different modes of transport; and
- Promotion of road safety through education and design.

Salehurst & Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2028 (July 2018)

2.2.5 The Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) contains a series of policies to help deliver the community's vision for the parish.

2.2.6 Policy IN3 aims for a sustainable village life that encourages healthier lifestyles. Therefore, the NDP will promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport, including making provision for those with mobility impairment by improving, maintaining and extending the local footpath, cycle and bridle path and public transport network.

2.2.7 Aspiration – Upgrade footpaths to all weather surfaced paths for horses, cycles and disabled people

SECTION 3 PERSONAL INJURY ACCIDENT DATA ANALYSIS

3.1.1 Personal injury accident (PIA) data has been obtained for the local and strategic highway network surrounding the site for the most recently available, at the time of request, five-year period; in this instance between 1st February 2015 and 31st January 2020.

A21 Robertsbridge Bypass/Northbridge Street Roundabout

3.1.2 A total of six injury collisions were recorded within the study area during the five-year assessment period. One of these was a serious injury collision which occurred when a fatigued driver travelling southbound on the A21 crossed the carriageway and collided with a lamp post and tree, close to the signalised crossing on the A21, north of the Northbridge Street roundabout.

3.1.3 The remaining five injury accidents resulted in slight injuries and included loss of control, impairment by alcohol, defective road surface, and rear end shunts.

3.1.4 The full list of accidents occurring within the study area during this period is summarised in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 – Summary of Accidents recorded within the A21 Study Area

Severity	Description	Location	Date
Serious	Fatigued car driver lost control, crossed the carriageway and collided with a lamp post and tree	A21 London Road	02/06/2015
Slight	Car driver impaired by alcohol collided with two parked cars, moving them into the road causing a blockage	Church Lane	12/10/2016
Slight	Car has skidded into on coming lane and collided with a parked car, which was then shunted into another parked car	Northbridge Street	26/01/2017
Slight	Rear end shunt – car collided with light goods vehicle	A21 Robertsbridge at junction of Northbridge Street	28/03/2017
Slight	Car driver lost control exiting the roundabout and collided with safety barriers	A21 Northbridge Roundabout	22/12/2017
Slight	A road defect caused a caravan to detach from the car towing it, colliding with one light and one heavy goods vehicle	A21 Robertsbridge	06/09/2018

Source: Sussex Safer Roads

- 3.1.5 All collisions only involved vehicles, i.e. no pedestrians, cyclists or horse riders were involved in collisions.
- 3.1.6 Of note, no accidents have occurred after September 2018 to January 2020 (the latest period data is available for).

SECTION 4 EXISTING CONDITIONS

4.1 Site Location

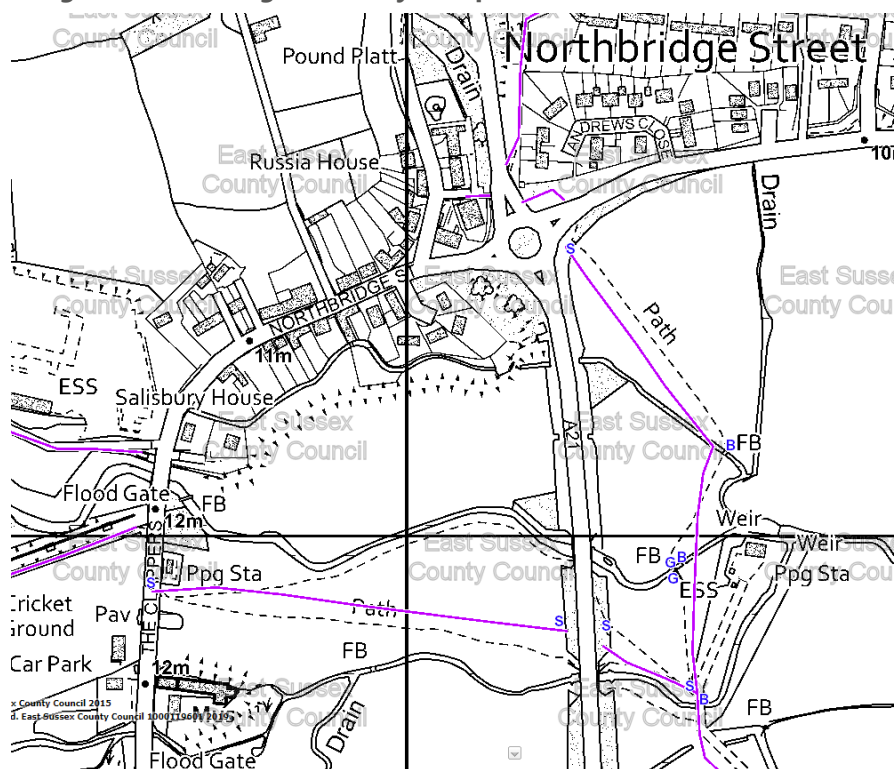
4.1.1 The development proposal is to extend the Kent and East Sussex heritage railway line from Bodiam to Robertsbridge. The extension of the railway requires the introduction of three level crossings; one on Northbridge Street, one on B2244 Junction Road and the final one on the A21 trunk road, which runs between London and Hastings. The proposed location of the crossing is circa 100m south of the roundabout junction, within the 40mph zone.

4.2 Walking, Cycling and Equestrians

4.2.1 A detailed review of the walking and cycling facilities at the A21 Northbridge Street Roundabout is undertaken within Section 5.

4.2.2 There are a number of public footpaths around the A21 Northbridge Street Roundabout, including No.s 7, 30a, 30b, 30c, 31, 64, 65. Image 4.1 below is a map taken from the East Sussex rights of way map that shows the location of all public footpaths in the area.

Image 4.1: Public Rights of Way Footpaths



Source: East Sussex County Council

4.2.3 There are no designated cycle routes near the A21 Northbridge Street Roundabout.

4.3 Public Transport

Bus

4.3.1 A few local bus services and a school bus service operate via the A21 Northbridge Street Roundabout, although none route along the A21 itself. Routes 254/304/305 are local bus services providing an hourly service, Monday to Saturday, between Hastings and Tunbridge Wells. Route 360 is a school bus service, which operates twice a day on weekdays. There are no Sunday bus services in the local area.

4.3.2 Details of these bus services are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 – Local Bus Services

Service	Destinations	Mon – Fri	Saturday	Sunday
254 /304/305	Hastings – Battle – Hawkhurst – Tunbridge Wells	1 per hour	1 per hour	No Service
360	Etchingham – Sedlescombe – Bexhill College	2 per day	No Service	No Service

Source: Traveline Southeast

4.4 Strategic Highway Network

4.4.1 The A21 starts in Lewisham within Greater London at a junction with the A20 known as "Loampit Vale Junction". It continues south-east through the borough, and through the London Borough of Bromley, eventually passing into Kent near Knockholt. The A21 links with various commuter towns eventually terminating in Hastings.

4.5 Local Facilities

4.5.1 There are a limited number of facilities surrounding the A21 Northbridge Street Roundabout. The main residential settlements are Robertsbridge to the south west and Salehurst to the east. Therefore, the primary desire line for pedestrians and cyclists would be from Northbridge Street to Church Lane and vice versa.

SECTION 5 SITE VISIT AND REVIEW OF FACILITIES

5.1 Local Area

- 5.1.1 A site visit was undertaken on Tuesday 19 February 2019 between 10:30 and 13:00. The site visit noted the form of available pedestrian, cycling and equestrian facilities around the A21 Northbridge Street Roundabout and through the study area. A site visit photo record is provided as Figure 5.1.

5.2 Pedestrian and Cycle Facilities

Northbridge Street

- 5.2.1 Northbridge Street provides a footway on the northern side of the carriageway, generally 0.5m – 1m in width. On the approach to the A21 Northbridge Street Roundabout, the speed limit changes from 30mph to 40mph, and the footway noticeably widens to circa 1.5m. There is no crossing infrastructure.

A21 - Northern Arm

- 5.2.2 The A21 is a single carriageway road with a speed limit of 40mph until circa 730m north of the Northbridge Street Roundabout. Footways, protected by metal guard rail, are present on both sides of the carriageway up to a signalised crossing, circa 50m north of the roundabout (Image 5.1).

Image 5.1 – A21 Northern Arm (Looking North)



- 5.2.3 The crossing has dropped kerbs and tactile paving provided. It is only active when called by a pedestrian and sensors are present to detect when it is safe for the lights to change (Image 5.2).

Image 5.2: A21 Northern Arm (Pedestrian Crossing)



- 5.2.4 Whilst the crossing appears to be a Puffin crossing, the green/red man signals include a cycle symbol, indicating that it is a Toucan crossing (Image 5.3). However, there is no signage indicating that the pathway either side of the crossing is a shared footway / cycleway.

Image 5.3 – A21 Northern Arm (Looking North)



- 5.2.5 The crossing provides access to a couple of public footpaths; No. 7 which heads north, adjacent to the A21 before heading north east and No. 65 which leads to the informal crossing over Church Lane.

Church Lane

- 5.2.6 Church Lane is a single carriageway country lane that provides access to Salehurst, to the east. The speed limit varies along the road; it is 30mph through the residential area and changes to 40mph in the immediate vicinity of the roundabout junction. There is a narrow footway on the northern side of the road, separated from the carriageway by a grass verge. Street lighting is present where the road is subject to a 30mph limit.

- 5.2.7 On the northern side of Church Lane, an uncontrolled crossing with dropped kerbs is provided (Images 5.4 & 5.5). No tactile paving, road markings or wayfinding signage is present.

Images 5.4 & 5.5: Church Lane - Uncontrolled Crossing (Left – Looking North, Right – Looking South)



- 5.2.8 From the southern side of Church Lane, No. 31 public footpath heads in a south easterly direction across open fields (Image 5.6).

Image 5.6: Public Footpath No. 31



A21 - Southern Arm

- 5.2.9 The southern arm of the A21 is also a single carriageway road with a 40mph speed limit until circa 150m south of the Northbridge Street Roundabout. There are no footways present on either side of the carriageway. Street lighting is provided in the 40mph section (Image 5.7).

Image 5.7: A21 – Southern Arm (Looking South – Towards Level Crossing Location)



5.3 Equestrian Facilities

- 5.3.1 There are no equestrian facilities provided within the study area.

SECTION 6 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

6.1 Stakeholder Engagement

- 6.1.1 The level crossing has planning permission. During the planning application it was the subject of appropriate stakeholder engagement with Highways England, East Sussex County Council in their role as highway authority along with other local stakeholders. There were no objections raised from the highway authority Highways Officer or the Public Right of Way Officer. As part of the TWAO process, there will be detailed ongoing liaison with HE through which if a need for any mitigation at the roundabout as a result of the level crossing proposals is identified, the findings of this WCHAR will be taken into account.

6.2 Local Engagement

- 6.2.1 As the project benefits from planning permission, local groups have been notified of the designs and wider proposals. The proposals focus on the delivery of a level crossing across the A21 and no comments were received in relation to pedestrian, cycling or equestrian facilities.

SECTION 7 USER OPPORTUNITIES

7.1.1 User opportunities for the A21 Crossing have been considered in context of this assessment and potential improvements to the area surrounding the A21 Crossing. These are explained Table 7.1.

7.1.2 Within the study area pedestrian activity occurs on the footways/paths around the Robertsbridge Roundabout and across the A21 at the signalised crossing to the north of the roundabout. Cyclist activity occurs at the roundabout and potentially along the A21 itself.

Table 7.1 – User Opportunities

Location	Opportunity
	General / Strategic
A21	None identified as no general or strategic walking/cycling/horse-riding opportunities which would benefit users in the study area
	Pedestrian and Cycle Specific
A21 Robertsbridge Roundabout	Footpath 31 routes south from Church Road arm of the roundabout and the crossing provision for pedestrians comprises a dropped kerb connection to the footway on the northern side of Church Road. Opportunity to upgrade crossing provision to provide tactile paving and pedestrian refuge island on Church Road arm of Robertsbridge roundabout to provide connection to PRow
A21 Level Crossing	Some limited cycling may occur along the A21. Opportunity to ensure cyclists can safely stop and wait at the barriers.
	Equestrian Specific
A21	None identified as no horse-riding facilities are located within the study area

SECTION 8 TEAM STATEMENT

- 8.1.1 As Lead Assessor, I confirm that this Walking, Cycling & Horse-Riding Assessment Report has been compiled in accordance with DMRB GG 142 and thus contains the appropriate information for the wider design team. The Walking, Cycling & Horse-Riding Assessment was undertaken by the following Assessment and Review Team:

Walking, Cycling & Horse-Riding Lead Assessor

[Redacted Name]

Principal Consultant

i-Transport LLP

Signed:

[Redacted Signature]

Dated: 06/01/2020

- 8.1.2 As design team leader, I confirm that the assessment has been undertaken at the appropriate stage of scheme development and that the wider design team has been involved in the process.
- 8.1.3 I confirm that in my professional opinion the appointed Lead Assessor has the appropriate experience for the role making reference to the expected competencies contained in GG 142.

Design Team Leader

[Redacted Name]

Associate

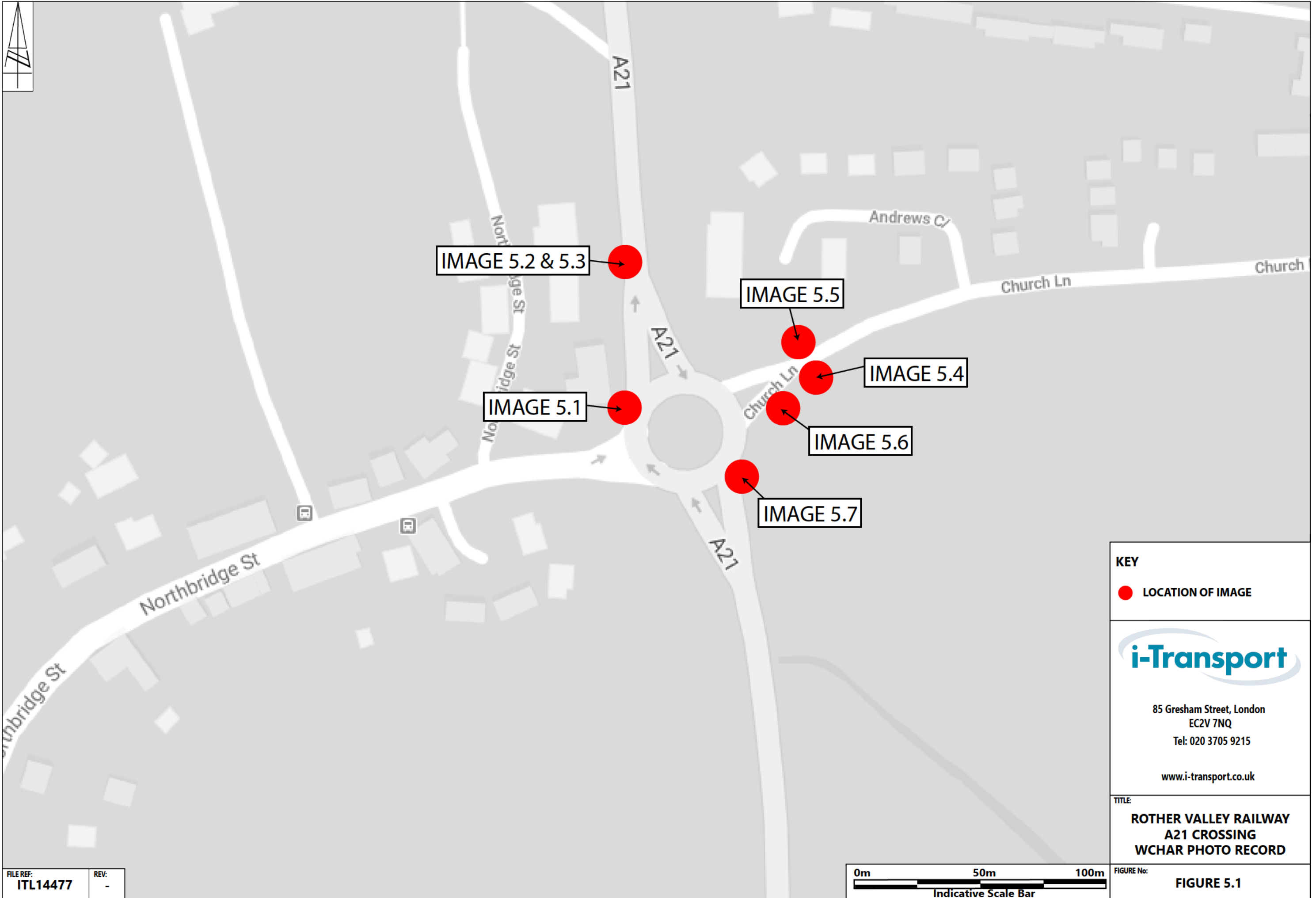
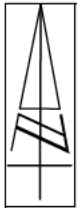
Arup

Signed:

[Redacted Signature]

Dated: 06/01/2020

FIGURE



KEY  LOCATION OF IMAGE	
 85 Gresham Street, London EC2V 7NQ Tel: 020 3705 9215 www.i-transport.co.uk	
TITLE: ROTHER VALLEY RAILWAY A21 CROSSING WCHAR PHOTO RECORD	
FIGURE No:	FIGURE 5.1

